

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

Having an understanding of employee relations issues that come into play in violent and potentially violent situations is important for all members of the Incident Response Team, as well as all Service supervisors and managers. It helps in coordinating an effective response, in determining whether or not outside resources will be needed in certain situations, and in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary actions are taken.

It is important to involve the human resources staff in such matters because most reported incidents will result in some type of disciplinary or adverse action. Also, the goal of workplace violence prevention efforts is to deal effectively and consistently with problem behavior early on. Reporting incidents to the human resources staff can result in swift disciplinary or adverse actions to stop the unacceptable behavior before it can escalate.

If relevant information is available regarding violent, harassing, threatening, and other disruptive behavior, the supervisor must determine the appropriate disciplinary action. Once a disciplinary action is taken, the employee has the right to challenge the final decision. The avenues of redress available include the Service's administrative or negotiated grievance system, the Service's Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Process, or the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Numerous holdings by third parties uphold agencies' rights to discipline employees who have threatened, intimidated, or physically injured their supervisors or coworkers, or otherwise caused a disruption in the workplace. However, since case law relating to disciplinary actions is constantly evolving, supervisors should always consult with the servicing human resources office and the Office of the Solicitor when considering disciplinary action.